

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

*TAB D1*  
1. A method for managing an electronic negotiation, comprising:

sending a negotiation initiating offer object to a first negotiating party for

5 specifying rules of the negotiation and for forming a negotiation initiating offer including specification of at least one attribute;

receiving the negotiation initiating offer from the first negotiating party;

*SUB A1*  
sending a counter offer object to a second negotiating party for forming a counter offer to a target negotiating party, wherein the target negotiating party of the

10 counter offer object is the first negotiating party;

receiving the counter offer from the second negotiating party;

validating the counter offer if the counter offer complies with the rules of the negotiation; and

sending the validated counter offer to the first negotiation party to engage

15 said first and second negotiation parties in active negotiation.

2. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein said counter offer object is adapted for specification of at least one additional attribute in forming said counter offer.

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3. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein said rules of the negotiation includes a rule selected from the group consisting of offer rules, disclosure rules, and deal striking rules.

4. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein said  
rules of the negotiation includes a rule selected from the group consisting of a rule  
allowing said first negotiating party to engage in active negotiation with a plurality of  
5 negotiating parties in a switchable bilateral negotiation, a rule allowing said first  
negotiating party to engage in active negotiation with at least one negotiating party in a  
concurrent bilateral negotiation, a rule allowing said first negotiating party to engage in  
active negotiation with exactly one negotiating party in a bilateral negotiation, and a rule  
allowing each of said negotiation parties to engage in active negotiation at least one other  
10 negotiation parties in a many-to-many multilateral negotiation.

5. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein said  
rules of the negotiation includes a rule selected from the group consisting of a rule  
allowing said second negotiating party to engage in active negotiation with only said first  
15 negotiating party and a rule allowing said second negotiating party to engage in active  
negotiation with a plurality of negotiating parties

6. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein said  
rules of the negotiation includes a rule allowing said first negotiating party to engage in  
20 active negotiation with a plurality of negotiating parties in a switchable bilateral  
negotiation and a rule allowing switching of active negotiation only when a competing  
offer improves upon a previous offer by a predetermined amount.

*Sub A2*

7. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein said rules of the negotiation includes a rule allowing said first negotiating party to engage in active negotiation with exactly at least one negotiating party in a concurrent bilateral negotiation and a rule allowing active negotiation when a corresponding offer satisfies said offer rules.

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8. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein said rules of the negotiation includes a rule allowing said first negotiating party to engage in active negotiation with exactly one negotiating party in a bilateral negotiation and a rule excluding all other parties from said active negotiation.

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9. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein at least one of said rules of the negotiation is a dynamic rule and wherein compliance of said dynamic rule depends upon a history of the negotiation.

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10. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein at least one of said rules of the negotiation is a static rule and wherein compliance of said static rule depends solely upon the offer.

11. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein said  
rules of the negotiation includes at least one offer rule selected from the group consisting  
of a rule allowing only eligible parties to participate in the negotiation, a rule requiring  
each counter offer to improve upon a previous offer, a rule requiring each counter offer to  
improve upon a previous offer by a predetermined amount, and a rule requiring each  
counter offer to be submitted within a predetermined period of time.

12. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein said  
rules of the negotiation includes at least one deal striking rule selected from the group  
consisting of a rule forming a deal upon acceptance of an offer by one of said parties, a  
rule allowing each of said parties to the negotiation to submit one more offer prior to  
forming a deal and after acceptance of an offer by one of said parties, and a rule allowing  
each of said parties to the negotiation to submit offers for a predetermined period of time  
prior to forming a deal and after acceptance of an offer by one of said parties.

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13. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, wherein said  
specification of at least one attribute includes specification of a value associated with the  
attribute and specification of a negotiability of the attribute value.

14. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, further comprising:

sending the counter offer object to said first negotiating party for forming a counter offer to the counter offer of said second negotiating party;

5 receiving the counter offer from the first negotiating party;

validating the counter offer of the first negotiating party if the counter offer complies with the rules of the negotiation; and

sending the validated counter offer of the first negotiating party to the second negotiating party.

10 15. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, further comprising:

sending the counter offer object to a third negotiating party for forming a third party counter offer to said negotiation initiating offer;

receiving the third party counter offer from the third negotiating party;

validating the counter offer of the third negotiating party if the counter offer complies with the rules of the negotiation; and

sending the validated counter offer of the third negotiating party to the first negotiation party.

16. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, further comprising:

forming a negotiation state machine upon receiving the negotiation initiating offer from the first negotiating party, said negotiation state machine maintaining a current 5 and previous states of the negotiation; and

updating said negotiation state machine with each validated counter offer.

17. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 16, wherein at least one of said rules of the negotiation is a dynamic rule and wherein compliance of 10 said dynamic rule depends upon said previous state of the negotiation.

18. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 16, wherein at least one of said rules of the negotiation is a static rule and wherein compliance of said dynamic rule depends only upon said current state of the negotiation.

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19. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving a request for a retraction of an offer from one of said negotiating parties;

5 validating the retraction request if the request complies with the rules of the negotiation, wherein said rules of the negotiation includes an offer retraction rule;

retracting said offer if the retraction request is validated; and

10 sending an offer retraction message to the target of the offer if the offer is retracted.

20. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving an accept/offer object for accepting one of said offers from one of said negotiating parties;

15 sending an offer acceptance message to said one of said negotiating parties; and

forming a deal based upon said rules of the negotiation, wherein said rules of the negotiation includes an offer acceptance rule.

21. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving a reject offer object for rejecting one of said offers of one of said negotiating parties from the target of said one of said offers; and

5 sending a reject offer message to said one of said negotiating parties.

22. The method for managing an electronic negotiation of claim 1, further comprising:

10 receiving a negotiation break off object for breaking off the negotiation with one of said negotiating parties; and

sending a negotiation break off message to said one of said negotiating parties.

*[Handwritten mark: A large 'J' with a horizontal line through it, followed by 'APR 10 1998' and a signature]*

23. A negotiation facilitator system for managing an electronic negotiation, comprising:

means for sending a negotiation initiating offer object to a first negotiating party for specifying rules of the negotiation and for forming a negotiation initiating offer including specification of at least one attribute;

means for receiving the negotiation initiating offer from the first negotiating party;

means for sending a counter offer object to a second negotiating party for forming a counter offer to a target negotiating party, wherein the target negotiating party of the counter offer object is the first negotiating party, said counter offer object adapted for specification of at least one additional attribute;

means for receiving the counter offer from the second negotiating party;

means for validating the counter offer if the counter offer complies with the rules of the negotiation; and

means for sending the validated counter offer to the first negotiation party to engage said first and second negotiation parties in active negotiation.

24. The negotiation facilitator system of claim 23, further comprising:  
means for sending the counter offer object to said first negotiating party for  
forming a counter offer to the counter offer of said second negotiating party; and  
means for receiving the counter offer from the first negotiating party;  
5 means for validating the counter offer of the first negotiating party if the  
counter offer complies with the rules of the negotiation; and  
means for sending the validated counter offer of the first negotiating party to  
the second negotiation party.
- 10 25. The negotiation facilitator system of claim 23, further comprising:  
means for sending the counter offer object to a third negotiating party for  
forming a counter offer to the counter offer of said negotiation initiating offer;  
means for receiving the counter offer from the third negotiating party;  
means for validating the counter offer of the third negotiating party if the  
15 counter offer complies with the rules of the negotiation; and  
means for sending the validated counter offer of the third negotiating party  
to the first negotiation party.

26. The negotiation facilitator system of claim 23, further comprising:  
means for forming a negotiation state machine upon receiving the  
negotiation initiating offer from the first negotiating party, said negotiation state machine  
maintaining a current state of the negotiation; and  
5 means for updating said negotiation state machine with each validated  
counter offer.

27. A computer program product for managing a multilateral negotiation, comprising:

computer code that sends a negotiation initiating offer object to a first negotiating party for specifying rules of the negotiation and for forming a negotiation initiating offer including specification of at least one attribute;

computer code that receives the negotiation initiating offer from the first negotiating party;

computer code that sends a counter offer object to a second negotiating party for forming a counter offer to target negotiating party, wherein the target negotiating party of the counter offer object is the first negotiating party, said counter offer object adapted for specification of at least one additional attribute; and

computer code that receives the counter offer from the second negotiating party;

computer code that validates the counter offer if the counter offer complies with the rules of the negotiation; and

computer code that sends the validated counter offer to the first negotiation party to engage said first and second negotiation parties in active negotiation.

a computer readable medium that stores the computer codes.

28. The computer program product of claim 27, wherein the computer readable medium is selected from the group consisting of CD-ROM, zip disk, floppy disk, tape, flash memory, system memory, hard drive, and data signal embodied in a carrier wave.

29. The computer program product of claim 27, further comprising:  
computer code that sends the counter offer object to said first negotiating  
party for forming a counter offer to the counter offer of said second negotiating party;  
and  
5 computer code that receives the counter offer from the first negotiating  
party;  
computer code that validates the counter offer of the first negotiating party if  
the counter offer complies with the rules of the negotiation; and  
10 computer code that sends the validated counter offer of the first negotiating  
party to the second negotiation party.
30. The computer program product of claim 27, further comprising:  
computer code that sends the counter offer object to a third negotiating party  
for forming a counter offer to the counter offer of said negotiation initiating offer;  
15 computer code that receives the counter offer from the third negotiating  
party;  
computer code that validates the counter offer of the third negotiating party  
if the counter offer complies with the rules of the negotiation; and  
20 computer code that sends the validated counter offer of the third negotiating  
party to the first negotiation party.

31. The computer program product of claim 27, further comprising:  
computer code that forms a negotiation state machine upon receiving the  
negotiation initiating offer from the first negotiating party, said negotiation state machine  
maintaining a current state of the negotiation; and  
5 computer code that updates said negotiation state machine with each  
validated counter offer.

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